

# ALPHONSE BROT



A Tacky Little Portrait  
of a forgotten Avant-Gardist

# Alphonse Brot

(1807–1895)

**Affiliations:** Classicism, Avant-Garde Romanticism,  
Petit-Cénacle, Jeunes-France, Bouzingo

**Praxis:** Playwright, Poet, Theorist.

## *Selected Publications (un-translated):*

- *Songs of Love, and Diverse Poems.* (1829) Louis-Janet, Paris. (Verse)
- *Jane Gray.* (1835) Hippolyte Souverain, Paris. (Novel)
- *Mad Love.* (1836) Hippolyte Souverain, Paris. (Novel)
- *The Terrible Night.* (1840) Hippolyte Souverain, Paris. (Novel)
- *The Brigands of the Loire.* (1842)
- *The Two Sins.* (1857). Louis Chappe, Paris. (Novel)
- *The Murderer of Theodore.* (1865) Levy-Frères, Paris. (Vaudeville Play)
- *The Spies.* (1875). Moniteur Universel, Paris.
- *The Goddess Reason.* (1880). w/Saint-Véran. Dentu, Paris. (Novel)

Alphonse Brot is among the most enigmatic members of the 1st-generation avant-garde. He is the earliest person on record to self-identify as a member of "l'avant-garde," and explicitly based this solidarity on the community's leftist political commitments, which included Saint-Simonism, Fourierism, and other proto-Socialist movements; but formally, he advocated for a synthesis between Romanticism and Classicism.

He soon ceased writing poetry, and devoted himself to novels and plays, specialising in popular melodrama for the lower classes. They continued the gothic-Romanticist tradition of exaggerated violence, passion, and transgression, and several of his titles suggest themes related to revolution and resistance to tyranny. They were very popular for the next sixty years; but despite his popularity at the time, within a few years of his death he was no longer read at all, either within the avant-garde or in mainstream society.

In 1866 a group of avant-garde poets advocating for an experimental synthesis between Classicism and Romanticism called themselves the 'Parnasse Contemporain', another phrase first used by Brot in 1829. In the course of his life, Brot lived to see what he termed "the avant-garde of Romanticism" evolve into Bohemianism, the Cult of Art, Parnassianism, Realism, Naturalism, Decadence and Symbolism, dying in 1895, the year before *Ubu Roi* premiered.

## THE MINSTREL

The young Minstrel is bound to the bellicose band;  
In the files of death flings himself without fear:  
The ancestral sword renders his vengeance severe,  
From his dignified shoulders his harp hangs at hand.

"Noble nation of songs," quoth the bellicose bard,  
"If the universe use you with indifference,  
One sword shall at least glimmer in your defense,  
One lute with soft chords shall your laurels regard!"

Then the Minstrel was captured; estranged overseas,  
He preserved all his pride; although Tara's own lyre,  
Beneath fingers that scorned it, refused to respire,  
For he flung off the strings to the timorous breeze.

My chains shrivel away, my harmonious lute,  
Who so often has sung of love and bravery;  
Your chords were not born for the spirits of brutes,  
They shall never resound held thus in slavery.

*Trans. Olchar E. Lindsann*

## THE YOUNG GIRL

She is far from the soil where Ivandor rests,  
A mob of suitors presses around her;  
She weeps, she flees from their drunken disorder,  
For her heart is possessed absolutely by death!

She sings tunes from her lovely land derived,  
Those sung long past by a hero favoured in her choice;  
Oh, you can scarcely guess, you dazzled by her voice!...  
The devouring regrets that lay waste to her life;

If, near her, Ivandor for moments seemed to thrive,  
Too soon for his beloved island he was killed:  
His island weeps upon his war-like ashes still,  
His Emma far from him shall not for long survive.

Raise a modest mausoleum for the maid,  
Near winding woods, which both the lovers knew so well,  
So that at last toward evening tender vows might knell  
To come beguile at times her desolated shade!

*Trans. Olchar E. Lindsann*

# **EVENT FOR A PARNASSIAN BARD**

## **For Alphonse Brot**

- 1.) Play your instrument with tragic grace.
- 2.) Destroy it as soon as your freedom is threatened.

*-By Olchar E. Lindsann*

## **PUBLICATIONS IN ENGLISH**

This TLP includes the only texts of Brot ever to be translated into English, with the exception of the Preface listed below.

### **ONLINE TRANSLATION**

Preface to *Songs of Love, and Diverse Poems* (1829).  
*Trans. By Joseph Carter.*

The first known use of the term 'avant-garde' as a self-designation of a multidisciplinary, experimental literary-artistic subculture.

Available for reading and free download at:

[www.bouzingo.blogspot.com](http://www.bouzingo.blogspot.com) under the 'Translations' tab.

# **MONOCLE-LASH REVENANTS**

## **FORGOTTEN AVANT-GARDISTS TLP # 3**

The Forgotten Avant-Gardists TLP series provides short introductions to those who have played vital roles in developing and maintaining the avant-garde, but have dropped out of our communal consciousness over the course of two centuries. Many have not been republished for a century; many have never been translated into English. These TLPs are incitements to further research, and place-holders until more research and work can be done to represent them fully within the contemporary avant-garde network.

**mOnocle-Lash Anti-Press**



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